

*sis sulcatá; columellá plicá anticá, valdè productá; labro intus fusco lirato.*

*Hab.* in insulis Philippinis.

19. PHOS CYANOSTOMA, A. Adams. *P. testá elongatè ovatá, acuminatá, albidá, anfractibus rotundatis, costatis, costis crassis, æqualibus, infra suturam plicato-nodosis, cingulis elevatis, transversis, subdistantibus, interstitiis longitudinaliter subtilissimè striatis; aperturá cyaneo tinctá; columellá tuberculatá, plicá anticá validá.*

*Hab.* in insulis Philippinis.

The interstices between the transverse ridges in this species are very beautifully engraved with fine longitudinal lines, and the aperture is tinged with blue.

20. PHOS LÆVIGATUS, A. Adams. *P. testá elongatè ovatá, lævigatá, pallide fusca; anfractibus subrotundatis, costatis, costis crassis, distantibus, lævigatis, infra suturam valdè nodosis, lineis tenuibus transversis ornatis; columellá plicá anticá productá; labro extus plicato, plicis numerosis confertis, intus substriato.*

*Hab.* Promontorium Bonæ Spei.

A large, smooth shell, with thick, simple ribs.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*Notices of one or two of the rarer Birds found in the South of Scotland.* By JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D.\*

THE following brief notes of several of our rarer birds, which have been met with principally in Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire, within the last few years, will I hope be considered as not altogether unworthy of notice. And the first which I shall mention is the

GREAT GREY OR CINEREOUS SHRIKE, *Lanius excubitor*, Linn. —I need hardly allude to its well-known appearance, its bent and toothed bill, its ash-gray plumage, with black wings, and tail bordered with white; and the striking, large patch of black on its cheek. Several specimens of this rare bird have been shot in this district of Scotland. The first instance of its appearance occurred a good many years ago, near the village of Darnick, about a mile from the town of Melrose, Roxburghshire. The bird had been observed in the neighbourhood for several days, and at last was shot as it was flitting backwards and forwards on the top of a hedge, with a small bird which it had killed;—in all probability looking for some convenient thorn on which to impale its victim preparatory to making a meal of it. The second specimen was killed in the adjoining county, several years after this, near the town of Selkirk, and was in the possession of the late Mr. Anderson, Surgeon, there. And the third is the one which I now exhibit: its unusual appearance, and light-coloured plumage,

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attracted the notice of the individual, who, after watching it for some time, got near enough to shoot it, in the neighbourhood of Newtown, St. Boswell's Green, Roxburghshire. I was informed by his brother, that it flew in a peculiarly jerking and undulatory manner, rising and falling in its flight along the hedge side. This was in the end of the month of February, or beginning of March; the other individuals having been killed about the end of winter or beginning of spring. It seems to be a full-sized bird; but from the slightly mottled appearance of the breast and belly, instead of white, as it is described, it may be a young male, or perhaps a female. [I regret this was not ascertained by dissection.]

Cuvier says, "It is rather common in France, where it remains throughout the year." It is however only an occasional visitor in Britain, and has generally been observed between autumn and early spring. Yarrell, in his valuable and beautiful book on 'British Birds,' gives various localities in England, and even Ireland, in which it has been found, but does not allude to any instance of its occurrence in Scotland. MacGillivray mentions in his excellent and elaborate work on British Birds, that to his knowledge it has been shot in the counties of Peebles, Lanark, Midlothian and Eastlothian. And that at the time his book was published, 1840, there were four Scottish specimens in Edinburgh, including one in his own possession; and from having examined the bird in a fresh state, as well as stuffed, and in skin, he considers himself qualified to state, that when the wing is closed, as represented by Mr. Selby, and also by Mr. Gould, *two* contiguous patches of white are seen, one on the base of the primaries, the other on that of the secondaries, and of this he gives a figure (*vide* vol. iii. p. 191). He supposes these gentlemen, in representing this bird with only *one* patch on the primaries, have mistaken for it the *Lanius borealis*, or the *Lanius ludovicianus*. These birds however are distinguished from the *L. excubitor*, which they considerably resemble, by several characters, one of these being the different proportional lengths of the quill-feathers; the *Lanius borealis* according to Cuvier, having the third primary the longest, and the fourth equal to the second: the *L. ludovicianus* has the second primary the longest, and the first and fifth equal; while in the *L. excubitor* the first quill is only half as long as the second, the second shorter than the third, fourth, or fifth, which are nearly equal, and the longest in the wing, the sixth being but very little longer than the second. Yarrell, I may mention, describes this bird as having the wing primaries and secondaries black, with a white bar at their base, which when the wing is closed form *two* white spots. Now in the specimen exhibited, which corresponds exactly with all the characters given of the *L. excubitor*, there appears to be only *one* white spot, on the primaries, when the wing is closed; as figured in the splendid works of Selby's 'Ornithology,' and Gould's 'Birds of Europe,' already alluded to. The woodcut in Bewick's 'Birds' seems also to correspond in this respect with this specimen. Whether or not this may be an accidental variety, I am unable to determine; and may I suggest the possibility of its being a mark of a *young bird* (as

in this specimen the point of the beak and the claws are exceedingly sharp, and the breast and abdomen slightly mottled with dusky or grayish lines), the white colour probably spreading more and more over the secondaries as the bird gets older?

The next bird to which I shall allude is also an accidental visitor or straggler; coming however from a totally different region from the last,—the frozen north, to spend a milder winter with us. It is the

WAX-WING OR BOHEMIAN CHATTERER, *Bombycilla garrula*, Flem.

—This beautiful bird is, I doubt not, so well known as to require no description: I may only remind you that in adult birds, the points of the secondaries have attached to them the curious vermilion appendages to which it owes its name. Coming from the north, its distribution through our island is just the reverse of the last; being more common in Scotland than in England. About the end of January, or beginning of February, 1850, a small flock of these birds, some seven or eight in number, were seen in the neighbourhood of Melrose, and instead of being very shy, as they are generally described, they were so tame that one man shot no fewer than four of them, one after another, as they were hopping about in some trees, before the rest became so much alarmed as to take to flight: other two were shot in one of the cottage gardens of Melrose; and another was killed some ten days after in the Abbotsford plantations. From the singularly knobbed or distorted appearance of this bird about the crop, the person who shot it considered it as diseased, and therefore not worth preserving, and accordingly his curiosity being excited, he set to work with his knife to discover if possible the cause, and was astonished to find as many as three large-sized hips of the common dog-rose in its crop—sufficient fully to account for its peculiar shape.

Although this bird makes its appearance irregularly from time to time in this country, during the winter months, and often in considerable numbers, still it is only as an accidental visitor that it occurs; and it is undoubtedly to be considered as a very rare bird. I may mention that in the 'Courant' newspaper of Saturday last, I observed a notice of a Wax-wing having been killed the preceding day in a garden at Portobello, in this immediate neighbourhood.

About the same time that the Wax-wings made their appearance near Melrose, a gardener at Dryburgh Abbey, a few miles farther down the Tweed, shot in his orchard the next rare bird which I shall notice—

THE GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER, *Picus major*, Cuv.—This bird is one of our rare permanent residents; it is described as being extensively distributed over Britain, but in all parts is rare, and in Scotland is rarer than in England; it is said to occur in some of our extensive northern forests; but in the south of Scotland it is very rarely to be seen. This specimen is now in the possession of J. Meiklam, Esq., Torwoodlee.

In the beginning of May last, a very fine specimen of an eagle, described as being the

CINEREOUS EAGLE, OR ERNE, *Haliaëtus albicilla*, Cuv., was shot by a gamekeeper within a few hundred yards of Bowhill House,



Selkirkshire, one of the residences of the Duke of Buccleuch. It was perched on some low alder bushes at the side of the river Ettrick, and was surrounded by flocks of crows and other birds, loudly complaining of his presence in that locality, their general feeling of innate enmity being in all probability increased by the fact of his having just lunched on one of them, as shown by the recent remains afterwards detected in his capacious stomach. This noble bird measured no less than 7 feet from tip to tip of his wings. I regret I have not been able to get a more particular description of it, so as to fix beyond a doubt the species; but the appearance of any eagle is by no means a usual occurrence in this part of the country. It is now, I understand, in the possession of the Duke of Buccleuch.

I may also notice in passing, that a few months ago a specimen of the

WOODPIGEON or CUSHAT, *Columba palumbus*, Linn., closely approximating to a *white variety*, was shot on the Gattonside hills, near Melrose, Roxburghshire; the head and neck being entirely pure white; and many white feathers were also scattered over different parts of its body. The bird was plump and in good condition, and when killed was feeding with a flock of wood-pigeons of the ordinary kind.

To the kindness of my friend Dr. Dumbreck I am indebted for being able to exhibit a specimen of the

QUAIL, *Coturnix vulgaris*, Flem., which is one of our very rare, or perhaps from its habits, one of our less seen summer visitors. It was shot in this county, near the Pentland hills, at Cockburn, about three or four miles above the village of Currie, by a gentleman whose dogs sprung it while in search of game, in the autumn of 1847. It is apparently an adult female, not having the dark semicircular marks on the sides of the neck which distinguish the male. In the following year two nests of the Quail were come upon by the mowers, in a field on Craiglockhart Farm, about three miles from Edinburgh, near the village of Slateford; and the poor hen birds were sitting so closely at the time, that the heads of both were actually struck off by the scythe. The nests contained respectively eight and twelve eggs, the usual range of the number being described as from six to fourteen; they are of a yellowish white, blotched and speckled with dark umber brown (some of which I now exhibit): and a friend informs me he has in his collection an egg of this bird, taken from a nest found in the neighbourhood of Musselburgh.

I may perhaps be allowed in conclusion to trespass on your patience a very little longer, with the brief details of a circumstance, and certainly I should think rather an unusual one, connected with the very peculiar instinct displayed by some birds, in preserving their eggs and young from threatened danger; for an account of which I am indebted to Mr. Whitecross, Gunmaker, Danwick. The subject is one which I am not qualified by any observations of my own to judge of; but the facts are stated to have occurred as follows:—A pair of the Common Sandpipers, *Totanus hypoleucos*, had a nest with its four eggs, among the grass of a thinly wooded plantation on the banks of

the Tweed; and this establishment had been pretty frequently visited by some lads, who were anxious in their cruelty to capture the dam on the eggs, but she being on the watch escaped, and the four eggs were seen to be all in the nest; the lads then retired to a little distance within sight, where they waited patiently for her returning and settling quietly down again; she did soon return, but this time accompanied by her mate, and the two birds soon after flew across the river apparently fighting, as was supposed, with one another; they then, after an interval of a minute or two, returned singly to the nest, and left it again in company, struggling and fighting together as before; and this was repeated four different times, with the same short interval between each time; after which there was a wearisome pause, the birds not again making their appearance; when the lads having given up hope of catching either of them, went to take what they now supposed to be the forsaken eggs, but were astounded to find the nest empty, and the eggs gone!! Considering it as beyond a doubt that the birds had carried off their eggs, they immediately crossed the river to the other side, where they had seen them disappear; but after a diligent search, could find no traces of them whatever; so well did the sagacious birds appear to have hidden their safely transported eggs! The distance the birds were believed to have carried their eggs could not have been less than some 70 or 80 yards! Mr. Yarrell, in his well-known work on 'British Birds,' when describing the *Skylark*, alludes to the fact of two or three instances being recorded of this bird's moving its eggs under fear of impending danger; and he quotes from Jesse's 'Gleanings' an account of a clergyman in Sussex seeing a pair of larks rising out of a stubble-field, and crossing a road before him at a slow rate, one of them attempting to carry even a young bird in its claws, which however was unfortunately killed by its loosing its hold when the bird was some 30 feet from the ground. The instance I have just detailed of the Sandpiper is the only one of any other bird, as far as I am aware, described as following this extraordinary plan of removing its eggs to a place of safety. Perhaps some of the naturalists among your numerous readers may remember other instances of a somewhat similar kind; helping, it may be, to throw some light on this little-known, exceedingly curious, and very interesting subject.—J. A. S.

#### ACHÆUS CRANCHII.

*To the Editors of the Annals of Natural History.*

Weymouth, June 10, 1851.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the great pleasure of announcing the occurrence of the rare *Achæus Cranchii*, Cranch's Spider Crab of Leach and Bell, as an inhabitant of the Dorsetshire coast. I dredged it on the 27th of May last, in six fathom water, on a shingly and rocky bottom with weeds in Weymouth Bay, just off Belmont and the Nothe.

The fourth and fifth pair of legs are abruptly curved, falciform,